

# THE COMMONS OF PENSACOLA

BY AMANDA PEET



DRAMATISTS  
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INC.

## THE COMMONS OF PENSACOLA

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*For Pen*

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JUDITH..... Blythe Danner  
LIZZY..... Zoe Levin  
ALI ..... Ali Marsh  
BECCA..... Sarah Jessica Parker  
GABE ..... Michael Stahl-David  
LORENA..... Nilaja Sun

## **CHARACTERS**

JUDITH — Age 71

BECCA — Age 43

LIZZY — Beautiful, age 16

ALI — Becca's sister, age 39

GABE — Becca's boyfriend, age 29

LORENA — Jamaican, age 48

*“The big sudden blows that come, or seem to come, from outside — the ones you remember and blame things on ... don’t show their effect all at once. There is another sort of blow that comes from within — that you don’t feel until it’s too late to do anything about it, until you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again.”*

— F. Scott Fitzgerald  
*The Crack Up*

# THE COMMONS OF PENSACOLA

## Scene 1

*A small, modest retirement condo in Pensacola, Florida, with a tiny open kitchen and a doorway leading to a bedroom offstage. Sliding doors lead to a small balcony. The place looks clean, but impersonal, and is sparsely furnished.*

*Judith, Becca, and Lorena enter with luggage.*

*The following four lines are rapid-fire, if not overlapping.*

JUDITH. Oh please, let's not argue, you just got here.

BECCA. That's the sign for "merge." That's what it looks like.

JUDITH. My only point was: it didn't *say* "merge."

BECCA. That's right. It's a picture. Of two lines *merging* together. When's the last time you got your eyes checked? (*Becca looks around, trying to hide her dismay about the apartment.*)

JUDITH. Ach, my *eyesight's* the least of my problems. (*Presenting the room.*) My new digs. Pretty ritzy-pitzy, huh?

BECCA. It's great.

JUDITH. Listen missy. Ya can't shit a shitter.

BECCA. No, but ... I mean — (*Becca looks for something positive to say.*) Look at this ... When you said "on the ocean" you weren't kidding.

JUDITH. *This* is what sold me. (*Judith tries to pull the balcony door open, but it won't budge. Becca moves to help her.*) You know I always liked to have an indoor-outdoor — crap — flow of space. (*Judith looks out the window and points.*) Right there! See the Harborview? I can see it clear as day. (*And, all the way from the kitchen:*)



LORENA. That's not the Harborview.

JUDITH. What is it?

LORENA. The Colony.

JUDITH. Well, whatever it is, I can see it perfectly.

BECCA. (*To Lorena.*) I'm so sorry, what's your name again?

LORENA. Lorena.

BECCA. Lorena.

JUDITH. What happened to your fellow?

BECCA. I don't know ... (*Becca goes to the door.*) Gabe?

JUDITH. (*Really loud whisper.*) Hey, how old is he?

BECCA. Do you actually think you're *whispering*?

JUDITH. Does he know about everything?

BECCA. Everyone knows.

JUDITH. No, they don't. (*Off of Becca's look:*) Well, they don't know you're our daughter. Thank God for small favors.

BECCA. (*Sotto voce.*) Um, I wish that were the case. (*Gabe enters, holding up a cell phone.*)

GABE. Hey!

JUDITH. There he is!

GABE. It was under the seat! (*Judith turns back towards the room, in hostess mode.*)

JUDITH. Welcome to the Commons of Pensacola. "Where a friendly staff is on-hand to meet all your needs." (*Judith walks towards Gabe and waves him into the living area.*) Take off your jacket. Lorena, would you take his jacket?

GABE. That's okay. I'll just ... (*Gabe tosses his coat on his bag.*)

JUDITH. Oh, good. (*Lorena taps Judith's shoulder and presents her with a six-inch-long container of pills and a glass of water.*) What? You gotta be kidding.

LORENA. Complaining won't get you anywhere with me, young lady. (*Lorena heads back to the kitchen.*)

JUDITH. Look at this. By the time I finish these I'll be dead.

BECCA. How *is* the old ticker?

JUDITH. Chuggin' right along. (*Gabe quickly turns to the balcony.*)

GABE. This is a prime spot.

JUDITH. Is this hurricane going to make an appearance, or what?

GABE. Looks pretty ominous. There's still a guy out there. Fishing on the ... the —

LORENA. (*Indicating the window.*) That's the mayor of the pier. (*Gabe looks out the window at him.*)

GABE. Shouldn't he get inside?

LORENA. He sits out there on his bucket fishing all day, every day. Rain or shine. Not a single bite.

JUDITH. (*Sotto voce.*) That makes two of us.

GABE. Are you bleeding?

JUDITH. Oh, God, what happened?

BECCA. Probably when you crashed into the divider.

JUDITH. I didn't crash into it, I went over it. (*Lorena gestures towards the bathroom.*)

LORENA. I'll just go ... It's okay. GABE. Here, let me.

GABE. You sure? BECCA. His mom's a nurse.

BECCA. Go with her. (*Lorena and Gabe exit. As soon as they're out of view, Judith and Becca tumble over each other in loud whispers.*)

JUDITH. How old is he?

BECCA. Are you out of your mind? You can't have a maid. (*Becca looks urgently for something in her purse.*)

JUDITH. It's just so that I can —

BECCA. You better hope she doesn't have a concussion or something. How are you even paying her?

JUDITH. Cash.

BECCA. What cash?

JUDITH. Cash. It's nothing. (*Becca applies some lipstick.*)

BECCA. Well, it's obviously something.

JUDITH. Is that Pigalle? (*Becca passes the lipstick to Judith, who promptly applies it, while saying:*) Trust me, I report everything to those S.O.B.s. (*Judith hands the lipstick back.*) I need someone. Who, in their right mind, could keep track of all these? (*She gestures to her seven-day pill box.*) Thirteen pills? Four times a day? Pfft. Let alone someone who's not in their right mind. (*Becca notices the baby secretary.*)

BECCA. They let you keep the baby secretary?

JUDITH. They didn't think it was worth anything. I said, have it your way. Daddy and I didn't have a single piece of furniture when we moved into Eleven-Eighteen. ... For a year, we lived like that. (*Judith cries.*) Dammit. (*Becca hugs Judith. Beat. Judith farts loudly.*) "Another county heard from."

BECCA. Holy moley.

JUDITH. I was about to say, don't squeeze me too hard. And don't make me laugh either, I have no muscle control. (*Quick beat.*) Honest to God, you know what I hated most about him?

BECCA. Let's try not to spend the —

JUDITH. Vicks VapoRub. Every Goddamn night. He thought he couldn't breathe without it ... The stench. Gives me the heebie jeebies just thinking about it. (*Judith turns her head back and taps under her eyes to clean up the tears, and Becca dabs a spot on her cheek.*)

BECCA. You look good.

JUDITH. Ach, baloney.

BECCA. No, really. You do. Your face looks —

JUDITH. Like an avalanche. (*Gabe reenters.*)

GABE. She'll be fine.

JUDITH. Now. Hey, who needs a drink?

GABE. I'm good.

BECCA. Just water.

JUDITH. That's all? Sit over there, kids. This is where I usually entertain. (*They all sit. Becca and Gabe hold hands.*) So. What line of work are you in?

GABE. I guess you could say I'm a guerilla-journalist.

JUDITH. Like Jane Goodall?

GABE. No. Like, a citizen journalist.

BECCA. Gabe filed stories from the field in Haiti. As a stringer.

GABE. She's so pleased with herself that she knows the jargon. Meanwhile it's the —

BECCA. MEANWHILE, you filed GABE. Lowest rung copy to the *New York Times* as a stringer. on the journalistic ...

JUDITH. Speaking of stringers, I just saw a floater. (*She wiggles her hand next to her ear.*) It was right there. Even when I close my eyes, it's still ... it's like the Fourth of July. Hey! Boy, have I got a surprise for you! Guess who's coming to dinner tomorrow for Thanksgiving?

BECCA. Who?

JUDITH. Lizzy!

BECCA. Lizzy. Really?

GABE. Lizzy is...?

BECCA. My niece. Are you serious? Where's she going to sleep?

JUDITH. With *me*. Needless to say: Ali ... is *NOT* coming.

BECCA. I talked to her this morning. She didn't tell me Lizzy was coming? (*Judith offers a purposefully dramatic, guilty shrug.*)

JUDITH. Well, don't look at me.

BECCA. Oh, Jesus. Well, I'm not going to lie to my sister. If Lizzy's here I'm going to have to tell her.

JUDITH. You know the last time I laid eyes on her, on Ali, was at the sentencing?

BECCA. Yes, I know. I was there, sitting right next to you. (*Judith addresses Gabe.*)

JUDITH. I guess you're aware of our situation? (*Gabe nods.*) I'll tell you: I'm the only person in the entire state of Florida who can't wait to get Alzheimer's. (*Lorena reenters. Everyone stands and gathers around her.*)

LORENA. Barely a scratch.

JUDITH. Are you sure?

LORENA. I'm perfectly fine. Will that be all?

JUDITH. Yes. Thanks a million, Lorena.

LORENA. I told you she'd come. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

GABE. You too.

JUDITH. Okay. (*Lorena doesn't move. Awkward beat.*) Is there something else?

LORENA. Can I get my...?

JUDITH. Oh, for crying out loud, I tell ya, my brain is ... (*As Judith hurries off towards her bedroom:*) Going, going, gonzo! (*Judith exits.*)

LORENA. I saw you on TV.

BECCA. Uh oh.

LORENA. You're prettier in real life.

BECCA. Thank you. Right? Or, no ... Which is worse?

LORENA. How long are you staying?

BECCA. Well, we're not sure — (*Becca and Gabe share a look.*)

GABE. Depends on this hurricane, I guess.

LORENA. Ali is your sister?

BECCA. She lives in New York.

LORENA. Your mother cries out for her.

BECCA. What do you mean?

LORENA. All the time ... in her sleep.

BECCA. They don't speak anymore.

LORENA. Ask her to come.

BECCA. I can't. She won't. (*Lorena nervously checks to see if Judith is approaching.*)

LORENA. She didn't want me to tell you this, but last week she —

JUDITH. (*Approaching from offstage.*) Here we go. Get with it, Judy. Right? (*She counts out the cash to Lorena.*)

BECCA. Which one?

JUDITH. What?

BECCA. No, I was just asking Lorena ... Which one of my shows did you see?

# THE COMMONS OF PENSACOLA

by Amanda Peet

1M, 5W

Judith has been divested of her assets and forced to leave her luxurious New York life after her husband's Wall Street scam became headline news. When her daughter Becca and Becca's filmmaker boyfriend pay Judith a visit to the one-bedroom condo Judith now occupies in Pensacola, Florida, everyone's motives are called into question. How will past and present circumstances inform how this family moves into the future?

*"A rich and absorbing drama, laced with biting humor."*

—**The New York Times**

*"Four stars! Penetrating and unflinching."*

—**The Independent (London)**

*"A soulful drama with caustic comedy, complex characters and real nuance. Amanda Peet makes a pleasing and promising debut as a playwright."*

—**The Hollywood Reporter**

*"Amanda Peet is especially good at well-tuned banter that can cut and cajole. A fine playwriting debut ..."*

—**The Huffington Post**

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